



SYCAMORE SHOALS HISTORY

Sycamore Shoals played a significant role in 18th-Century history as the setting for some of the most dramatic events to occur in the expansion of America's western boundary. Here was established the first permanent American settlement

outside the original 13 colonies, and the Watauga Association--the first majority-rule system of American democratic government--was formed in 1772.

Sycamore Shoals became the hub of the frontier as pioneers from Virginia and North Carolina settled along the Watauga River. Trails soon connected Sycamore Shoals (Elizabethton) with Fort Robinson (1761), Fort Patrick Henry (1776), Sapling Grove (Bristol), Rocky Mount the first territorial capital, (in Piney Flats between Bristol and Johnson City), and settlements in northwestern North Carolina and South Carolina.

In May, 1772, the settlers compiled the "Articles of the Watauga Association" and elected five of their number to "govern and direct for the common good of all the people." This group, called a court, combined the legislative, judicial, and executive functions of the infant government.

THE TRANSYLVANIA PURCHASE

The Transylvania Purchase, the largest private or corporate real estate transaction in United States' history, took place March 17, 1775, at Sycamore Shoals. The Transylvania Company, led by Richard Henderson of North Carolina, purchased from the Cherokee Indians over 20 million acres of land--all the lands of the Cumberland River watershed and extending to the Kentucky River--for 2,000 pounds sterling and goods worth 8,000 pounds. Twelve hundred Indians reputedly spent weeks in counsel at Sycamore Shoals prior to the signing of the deed; Chief Dragging Canoe was firmly against deeding land to the whites, but the other chiefs ignored his warnings and signed the deeds amidst great ceremony and celebration.

FORT WATAUGA



Fort Watauga, which had been built near Sycamore Shoals, became a refuge for the settlers in the summer of 1776.

Dragging Canoe returned home after the Sycamore Shoals Treaty (or Transylvania Purchase) determined to drive the white settlers from Cherokee lands. He was aided by English agents whose plans called for the Indians to attack

the settlers from the rear while the English attacked them from the sea. A band of warriors under Old Abram of Chilhowee struck against Fort Watauga, where most of the settlers had already fled. Lt. Col. John Carter, Capt. James Robertson (founder of Nashville in 1779), Lt. John Sevier (Tennessee's first governor in 1796), and other officers commanded the fort. The Indians laid siege to Fort Watauga for approximately two weeks, but when the pioneers failed to surrender, the Indians departed.

A reconstruction of Fort Watauga, based on archeological and historical research, stands near the Sycamore Shoals river crossing. The original location was approximately 1,500 yards to the southwest. A scenic trail leads from the fort to the bank of the Watauga River and the historic Shoals.

(For more information check out the [Watauga Historical Association](#))

THE BATTLE OF KING'S MOUNTAIN

It was at the Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga that the Overmountain Men assembled on September 25, 1780. The muster included approximately 1,100 fighting men, who marched the next day over the mountains in search of the British Major Patrick Ferguson and his Tory militia. Eleven days later on October 7, 1780, the Overmountain Men led by Colonels John Sevier and Issac Shelby found Ferguson's army at King's Mountain, South Carolina. In little more than an hour on that October afternoon Maj. Ferguson lay dead, and his army defeated. The victory at King's Mountain has been described as a crucial first link in a chain of events that led to the eventual surrender of the British forces in the Revolutionary War.